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Approximately 100 students from 16 area high schools debated global climate and other environmental issues at the first 10th Congressional District Model Congress held at Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire.

U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, R-10th, of Highland Park, hosted the event on Earth Day, April 22, as a way of introducing students to the political process and giving them an opportunity to debate issues of national importance.

"The purpose was to educate the kids in as realistic a setting as possible to engage in important issues using the real House Rules, with a member of Congress and real congressional staff, to resolve their differences and build bi-partisan coalitions the way it actually happens in Washington," he said.

The students heard expert testimony from leading environmental organizations, such as the Chicago Climate Exchange and the Sierra Club as well as business organizations.

Two mock pieces of legislation were introduced and debated. One dealt with global climate change and the other would establish a 10th Congressional District School Conservation Corps. That bill would provide federal grants to school groups working on environmental cleanup and conservation projects in the 10th district. Kirk said he plans to introduce it as actual legislation in Congress.

"We're gathering students again to review what the School Conservation Corps can do, and moving from debate to reality in ways that these young Americans can make a difference," he said.